

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### A Crumbling Creed

I DO not know whether the Archbishop of Canterbury is a brave man, but I am convinced that he is a frightened one. I put the matter in this way because desperate actions may result from either fear or courage; and the position of religion is to-day such that the Archbishop might be animated by either of the two frames of mind named. It will be noted by those who pay attention to the realities of history—such people are always in the minority—that the Churches have always dreaded the growth of Atheism. This we take to be because Atheism admits of no compromise. Differences as to what constitutes "real" Christianity have been common from the very dawn of Christendom. The contest is evident in the New Testament. Hundreds of Christian sects have existed, and the ferocity of the struggle is there for anyone who cares to spend half an hour with the right kind of book. It is true that all Christians must believe that the scriptures were developed under the guidance of God, but it must be admitted that no guide ever managed to get the people he was teaching in such a state of confusion as to what he meant. The followers of Jesus were disputing as to the meaning of the New Testament when first history becomes associated with them; and they are still at it, although all that has happened is that in the face of a determined enemy, Christians have become more gentlemanly in their behaviour. If God ever gives mankind another expression of his will he would do well to appoint a good newspaper man to go through his copy before it is printed.

The enemy that Christianity, and other religions, has always hated most heartily, and still hates, is Atheism. Differences of the quality of this or that God, disagreements as to what this or that meant in New Testament times could be tolerated. All left the essentials of religion untouched. But there was no possibility of marrying any religion to the Atheistic attitude. This much was evident in the best days of ancient Greece. But with the revival of Europe (please note the significance of that word "revival") Atheism came to the front. And there could be no identification between that and religion. It meant war, and war to a finish. The attempt to provide a cover for Atheism by such non-committal terms as "Agnosticism" and "Rationalism" might attract some, but in the main Atheism goes on growing.

The Churches met this enemy in a way that has become historic. It persecuted and it lied for the greater glory of God. The reader will find the Christian ethic clearly stated by St. Paul: "If my lie hath abounded to the greater glory of God why then am I judged a sinner?" Truth has always suffered at the hands of the Christian Church.

The first move in relation to Atheism was to deny its existence. Even to-day it is not uncommon to find some devout Christian saying in shocked tones: "You really cannot believe that God does not exist," but the Church did admit the existence of an Atheist here and there, and he was just a foul-living individual, but he served as a horrible example to warn Christians. In the Christian records the important thing was not so much the way a man lived as was the way he died. But the number of Atheists increased until their existence was granted, but their wickedness remained. A little help was given to the Churches by the substitution for Atheism of "Agnosticism." Atheism then began to masquerade in a way that enabled many to ward off Christian malignity by the plea "I do not say God does not exist, I suspend judgment." The futility of such a confession should be obvious. For a long time the main use for the limited number of Atheists who were officially allowed to exist, was to supply material for death-bed scenes of Atheists crying to God to forgive them. It is characteristic of historic Christianity to count it of greater importance how a man dies than how he lives. In fact, dying is sometimes the only contribution of value that a man gives to society. It is a form of atonement for his having lived.

But the number of Atheists went on steadily increasing—officially. The rise of a new Russia did something to popularise Atheism. Not of course in the first stages of the Revolution for never did the English religionists work harder to depict Atheism as everything that was individually foul and collectively disastrous to a nation than during the first twenty years of the new Russia. But circumstances forced "Christian" England to welcome an alliance with a nation of nearly two hundred millions, and one simply could not go on praising a nation and its courage and development, and at the same time denounce it on account of its professed Atheism. The timid took heart and the value of religion declined. During the period of the Bradlaugh struggle it is told that a Member of Parliament said to Bradlaugh "Good God, Bradlaugh, what does it matter whether there is a God or not?" To-day a larger and growing number of people realise that the real alternative is Atheism or Theism. Modern Atheism is openly expressing itself in a way that it has never hitherto done. The godist is on the defensive.

I think that what I have said concerning the Archbishop of Canterbury will now be understood. He has openly called attention to the growth of Atheism. Perhaps it would not be correct to say that he was either wholly a brave or wholly a frightened man. Perhaps the better view to take would be that the advance of Atheism has frightened the Archbishop to exercise courage. Certainly he is the first leading theologian who has emphasised in public the rapid growth of intellectual Atheism. He tells his followers to cease amusing themselves with discussions about minor differ-

ences and to recognise that the great enemy to-day is declared Atheism. Over and over again he has stressed the fact that Atheism, naked and unashamed, is on the march; and we think he fully realises that the Atheism of to-day has behind it the force of modern anthropology. No wonder that the Archbishop should be frightened at the outlook. Years ago, Cardinal Newman confessed that when he looked at nature for God he found he was looking at his own image. To-day, where religion is concerned men and women in growing numbers are realising that it is not God who made man, it is man who makes gods. If that be not true then three parts of modern anthropology is a fraud. To-day we know how the gods—big and little—came into existence, and history shows us how they shrivel and disappear.

Actually the position to-day of historic Christianity is that of a dwindling army occupying a closely invested position. The besieged cannot count on reinforcements of either men or material. The army of God to-day is fighting long range guns with bows and arrows. This language is by no means extravagant. Less than a century ago the Christian Church, although showing marks of the conflict, appeared to be able to at least make a respectable appearance to a not very critical public. But for three parts of a century we have had a development of popular education, and the theory of evolution has opened up a series of discoveries such as our forbears of a century since scarcely visualised. Anthropology has laid a solid foundation which leaves us without doubt that the origin of religious ideas and customs. The religious marriage has been legally abolished. A declaration of honesty has replaced the religious oath, when desired Sabbatarianism while still in existence, has experienced some very strong blows, and the clergy, established and otherwise, try their hardest to transform their sermons into not very brilliant essays on social life. In this changed world the Christian is still able to tell us, when pressed, what he believes in God, but the unbeliever is able to tell him why he believes, and there is a world of difference between the two attitudes.

Many years ago, with that prophetic insight which enables the poet to run ahead of accepted demonstrative fact, Heinrich Heine wrote of the Christian God:—

"We have known him so well from his cradle upwards, in Egypt, where he was brought among sacred calves, crocodiles, holy onions, Ibises and cats. We have seen him as he bid adieu to these playmates of his childhood and obelisks and spinxes, and became a small god-king in Palestine to a poor pastoral people, and dwelt in his own temple-palace. We saw him later when he came into contact with the Assyrian-Babylonian civilisation, and laid aside his too human passions, and no longer beheld wrath and vengeance, at least no longer thundered for every trumpery trash of sin. We saw him emigrate to Rome, the capital, where he renounced all national prejudices and proclaimed the heavenly equality of all races, and with such fair phrases formed an opposition to the ancient Jupiter, and intrigued so long that at last he rose to power and from the capital governed the State and the world, *verben et orben*. We saw how he spiritualised himself more and more, how he sweetly wailed when he became a loving father, a universal friend of humanity, a benefactor of the human race, a philan-

thropist. It all availed him naught. Hear ye the bell ring. Kneel down. They bring the sacrament to a dying god."

A brilliant outline by one of the greatest geniuses that ever came out of Germany, of the history and development of the Christian God. But Heine wrote before a scientific anthropology was well established, or his survey would have gone further back and the conclusion would have been more deadly. What is the use of troubling about what God said or wished, or what he may do or has done when we know that all the gods that ever existed owe their beginning to the ignorance and fears of primitive humanity. John Morley, better known as Lord Morley, said wisely that in his day gods are not denied they were argued out of existence.

I think, therefore, that the answer to my question whether our Archbishop of Canterbury is a brave theologian or a frightened one may be best answered by saying that he is a frightened one whose fears have driven him to a franker confession of the truth than has marked any of his predecessors. The Archbishop is now really telling his people that they are fighting with their back against the wall. They can neither retreat nor advance.

It was one of the generalisations of Charles Bradlaugh that the final battle will be fought between Atheism and the Roman Catholic Church. That was a shrewd forecast, for the Catholic Church, despite its upholders in high places is really dependent more and more upon the "common people." So far as the Church is concerned the primitive beliefs upon which Christianity was built must be defended. Meanwhile the education of the people develops. Already the Church pleads where it once issued orders. Its thunders take on the quality of toy drums. Atheism is marching with giant strides, and against an educated Atheism no religion can hold its own.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### THE FOUNDER OF CONSTANTINOPLE

THE first Christian Emperor of Rome was not a spotless saint, although Gibbon has been accused of blackening his character. Yet, that discriminating investigator, Niebuhr, in his famous "Lectures on Roman History," avers that: "Gibbon judged him with great fairness; otherwise he has scarcely met with any but fanatical admirers and detractors. . . His motives in establishing the Christian religion appear to have been very strange. Whatever religion was in his head must have been a confused mixture. On his coins he has the 'Sol invictus,' he worships Pagan deities, consults the haruspices, holds heathen superstitions, and yet he shuts up the temples and builds churches. As president of the Nicene Council we can only look upon him with disgust; he was himself no Christian and would never be baptised till he was at the point of death."

That Constantine was a great statesman is questionable. Many of his enactments proved highly injurious, and some were ferocious. His personal character was bad even for the age in which he reigned. Instigated by the spiteful jealousy of his second wife, Fausta, the Emperor put his eldest son Crispus to a shameful death. Then his own mother, the pious Helena, charged Fausta with adultery and Constantine sentenced her to suffocation in a bath. Even the obsequious Eusebius confesses that his master was truculent and greedy, and contemporary writers agree that Constantine squandered public revenues and that peculation pervaded the State services.

As an administrator, Constantine intensified forced labour in road construction and repairs and enormously increased the tolls on commercial undertakings essential to the community, while exempting from taxation luxuries for the rich imported from the Far East. Again, he depressed the industrial orders by compelling artisans and craftsmen to become hereditary bondsmen. Taxation was increased, while "he drastically legislated to restrain small farmers who had fallen into debt owing to excessive taxes and high prices from removing to other provinces where economic conditions, perhaps, might have been less severe, and in this wise he accelerated the reduction of the rural free class to serfdom."

Truly, the foundation of Constantinople must be placed to the Emperor's credit and, despite its chequered career, the Eastern Empire survived for a thousand years after the Western Empire had fallen into irretrievable ruin.

The early history of Christianity is shrouded in semi-darkness, but apparently throughout the first three centuries of our era its cult was virtually restricted to urban areas. As Edward Gibbon has demonstrated, the new faith's increase was facilitated by the splendid Roman road system, its flourishing industries and commerce, its civic security and the languages spoken both in Rome's Eastern and Western dominions.

The influence of city government in the organisation of the infant Church is noticeable in its imitation of the municipalities. The administrative system of the leading cities in each province was copied. Each province became an episcopal centre and the earliest dioceses coincided with the provinces.

It is estimated that at Constantine's accession not more than one-tenth of the Roman population had embraced the Christian cult but its adherents were far more numerous in the East than in the West. And when Constantine had at last overcome all his rivals and assumed supreme control of the Roman State he was seemingly solicitous to conciliate the somewhat turbulent Christians in the distant provinces of the Empire.

In 313 the Emperor promulgated the Edict of Milan which placed all cults on a basis of equality. The lives and property of Christians were now free from molestation and Constantine's policy was designed to placate the Galileans without causing offence to his Pagan subjects. By this time the Christians had quarrelled among themselves, and the contending adherents of Arius and Athanasius were at daggers drawn. Our knowledge of the internal affairs of the Church at this period is so fragmentary that Dr. Harnack suggests that this is not due to accident alone.

In any case, as Professor Thompson intimates in his "History of the Middle Ages": "The Christian doctrine that civil authority emanated from a supreme and omnipotent God accorded with the Emperor's absolutistic inclinations. But at the same time he hesitated to repudiate the State religion and abandon the time-honoured worship of the Emperor whose peculiar blend of religion and patriotism had been one of the great sources of imperial power." Again, there were disturbing signs of secession in the outlying provinces of the Empire which might be silenced by the granting of religious equality.

In addition to minor heretical sects, the Church was rent in twain by the rival adherents of Athanasius and Arius. The Athanasians were zealous Trinitarians, while the Arians resembled the modern Unitarians. The former prevailed in the West, while the latter predominated in the East. Their conflicts were always uproarious and frequently led to bloodshed, and their fierce encounters convulsed the Church for centuries. Constantine convened the Council of Nice in 325 to enable the contending factions to compose their quarrels. This proved impossible and, after long and furious contentions, the party of Athanasius triumphed. Arius was banished to Illyria; his writings were publicly burned and the penalty of death was

decreed against any subject found in possession of his works. Also, all Arian heretics were denied the privileges possessed by the orthodox believers. Indeed, Catholic Trinitarianism seemed completely victorious and the cause of Arius completely discredited.

Yet the whirligig of time brought its transient revenge, and Arius was recalled from exile in 328. Presumably, the impending removal of the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople constrained the artful Emperor to restore the Arians to favour, owing to their ascendancy in the East. While his authority rested on Latin Athanasianism he had championed that form of faith. But now it became expedient to adopt an Arian attitude. The Arians eagerly embraced their opportunity and the Council of Tyre assembled in 334 A.D. The ex-communication of Arius and his supporters was cancelled and an Imperial order nullified the decisions of the Nicean Council. In the following year Anathasius was deposed and exiled to Gaul. Then, in 336 Arius suddenly expired in suspicious circumstances on the eve of his projected restoration to holy orders. Gibbon concluded that this fatal event is to be traced either to miracle or poison. In any case, the Christian enemies of Arius hailed his death as conclusive evidence of divine intervention. Constantine himself died in 337, and only at the point of death, was baptised by his former enemy Eusebius of Nicea with Arian ceremonial.

Gibbon's inimitable account of Constantine's tardy baptism and the pious attitude he assumed is memorable. The bishops who officiated during his fatal illness were highly edified by his certainty of salvation. He was apparently persuaded "that the Church possessed an infallible remedy though he chose to defer the application of it till the approach of death had removed the temptation and danger of a relapse. . . The example and reputation of Constantine seemed to countenance the delay of baptism. Future tyrants were encouraged to believe that the innocent blood that they might shed in a long reign would be instantly washed away in the waters of regeneration; and the abuse of religion dangerously undermined the foundations of moral virtue."

As the sacrament of baptism was supposed to provide a complete expiation for an evil life, the immortal soul was therefore restored to its primitive purity and made ready for its reception in paradise among the very elect themselves.

The Church Fathers and the clergy generally favoured infant baptism, although adult converts from Paganism might regularly receive the sacrament from the bishop and his assistant clergy after Easter until Pentecost. Still, evidently many of the proselytes deferred their baptism until they could expiate their transgressions once for all. As the author of the Decline and Fall pointedly observes: "By the delay of their baptism they could continue to indulge their passions in the enjoyments of this world, while they retained in their own hands the means of a sure and easy absolution."

Although the Church Fathers deprecated this delay, they admitted the efficacy of deathbed baptism. Chrysostom, a cleric, who in some respects rose above the ecclesiastical corruption of his period, pleaded that virtue should be practised for her own sake, and not for personal advantage alone. He also stressed the danger of sudden death minus the benefit of baptism and urged that the belatedly baptised will not partake of the transcendent glories of paradise, but only blink like lesser stars while those baptised in youth dwell in eternal splendour.

"I believe," notes Gibbon, "that this delay in baptism though attended by the most pernicious consequences, was never condemned by any general or provincial council, or by any public act or declaration. The zeal of the bishops was easily kindled on much slighter occasions."

## ACID DROPS

We quite appreciate the statement that the discharge of men—and women—from the Forces must go through a series of movements. Also that a considerable number of the Allied armies will be needed for some time to maintain peace, and to make sure that the defeated nations "play fair." But what will puzzle many is the fact that war-like preparations are still going on. Each of the conquering nations is making it a first step to continue war work, when common people were expecting that labour would be at once turned over to make goods, etc., the needs for which are staring everybody in the face. Not for the first time have we resolved that the war should be one to end war. In fact, there are signs that the first step will be for each of the conquered and freed nations—big and little—to make sure they are re-armed—against whom?

The "Church Times" is under no delusion about the future of Christianity. It has not always been so, but facts are stubborn things, and even the lie about the conquering Christ seems to be worn out. For a very brief time after the opening of the war preachers wrote and spoke, and some openly prophesied that a revival of Christianity was in sight. Fear and faith—religious faith—run not unusually together. But throughout the whole of this war the weakness of religious belief was patent. And now the "Church Times" sorrowfully admits "there is little evidence of a consuming desire to win Europe for Jesus Christ." As for converting Japan, "the very thought seems to have gone outside the mind of ordinary people." So, bang goes the prospect of gathering in more adherents to the Christian religion.

The "Church Times" is inclined to blame Christians for this failure to capture Japan for Jesus. But how can one expect the Japanese to be influenced by the religion of its conquerors, when in Europe freethought is advancing in giant steps, while on its borders there exists so a great a country as Russia, which has officially set Christianity on one side, and the complete failure of Christianity to overcome the massed millions of Chinese? The old cry used to be that God strengthened man's weakness; to-day it is man's strength that is pushing the gods further and further back and establishing their weakness.

Most people will open their eyes if they read in the Roman Catholic "Universe" that the B.B.C. is "curiously insensitive to Christianity." This after the B.B.C.'s morning whine of trust in God, the weakness of man, and the avowed determination not to permit anything that runs contrary to what it calls "the Christian tradition." There is no other institution in this country—setting on one side the Roman Church—that has lied more lustily than the B.B.C. in the interests of the Christian religion. And it will continue on those lines until our leading writers, scientists and other decline to lend their names and their tongues to this great religious fraud, and publish their reason for so doing.

Of course, what is annoying is that the Roman Church is not getting as much publicity as it would like. It would probably swallow its ration, but there are numerous things said on the wireless that ignores Christianity. If anyone cares to read for a few weeks the Roman Catholic papers, with column after column of Roman Catholic nonsense, he will realise the main cause of its criticism. For our part, we would like, since no freethought is permitted by the B.B.C. that it gave full scope to the clotted rubbish of the Roman Catholic Church—with special emphasis on some of its recent miracles.

A momentous event has just occurred—no, not the atomic bomb. A Russian airman flying over Mt. Ararat saw the remains of a huge boat "built as though the designer expected waves to wash right over it." And on his return he said: "I believe what we have seen is Noah's Ark." The "Universe," not quite so sure about it in these days of scepticism, points out that the Catholic Encyclopedia says that "tradition is divided as to the Ark's exact resting place," otherwise, we presume, it would have plumped for the Ark with the assurance it shows

when dealing with Lourdes or similar nonsense. Or perhaps it was the Russian airman, instead of a Canadian or American, which makes it sceptical. After all, the Russian might be pulling somebody's leg.

One of our military officers in Burma recently gave a talk before the microphone. He extolled the people's loyalty, kindness and other virtues. But he made one point that must have escaped the eye of the B.B.C. He said all the members of the group were without religion. We are not surprised at the officer's astonishment. The poor beggar had probably been brought up by Christian parents. By the way, we commend very warmly "The Soul of a People," by H. Fielding, published in 1808. He held a Government post there. The Burmese are mainly Buddhists.

Archbishop Downey has at last discovered that "Christianity is assailed on every side," and that "what is called the new morality—but is only the old immorality—is put in its place." Naturally, everything, or nearly everything, that the Roman Church does not like is "immorality"; it always has been and always will be. A return must be made, wailed the Archbishop, to "the old Christian principles." These priests never seem to realise that the world is moving, and that except perhaps during the Dark Ages, when Christianity ruled the roost, it always has moved—and the fact that the Archbishop has to speak in this strain is proof enough that, in spite of himself, he is beginning dimly to realise something is changing with the worn-out world of Christian beliefs. If he lives long enough his dim realisation of the change will come to be a certainty.

Comparatively silent while the fortunes of war were not too cheerful for us, the clergy have been quite vocal since the victory of the Allies. Yet the responsibility for the slaughter rests with God—if he exists. If there is a God, he is quite careless of human life and suffering. A few millions of men locked in conflict is nothing to him; it is, we may trust some of his followers, part of the plan. If there is a God he designed everything, fashioned beaks for slaughter, teeth for tearing, talons for destruction, and tolerated man with his numerous weapons of destruction. It is an outrage on decency to attempt to marry the facts with the Christian theory. Common sense forbids the bans. A world without God is an inspiration to toil for betterment. A world such as ours, with a God controlling it, is enough to drive insane anyone who has intelligence to appreciation. The greatest kindness we can give the Christian deity is to hope that he does not exist.

Religion in the backwoods of America must always be—to a Freethinker—a thing of joy to read about, so the account given by Mr. James West in his book "Plainville," dealing with a small township in the Middle West, of its Christian atmosphere makes very entertaining reading. It has a population of 275, and religion is represented by one Jew, one Roman Catholic family—, not considered Christian by the others—the "Christian Church" (really, a kind of degenerate Lutherism), Baptists, Methodists, the Church of God Holiness, the Dunkards, the Russellites, and two or three Mormons. They are all Fundamentalists, they all have regular revivals, and all children are expected "to be saved" at the age of twelve or so; the boys, by the way, resist the change far more than the girls.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster says "it is right to thank God." Well, we would agree with him if we but knew what we have to thank him for. We can appreciate the fact that the united people of this country did their best to help win the war, but where, in the name of all that is sensible, does God come in? We took six years to win the greatest world war, and we can appreciate the manner in which men and women of all ranks did their work. But God, who could in theory have prevented the war, what, in the name of all that is sensible, had God to do with it all? Of all the radically foolish performances that we witness to-day, that of thanking God for doing nothing for nearly six solid years is the most foolish.

## "THE FREETHINKER"

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London, E.C.4.  
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### TO CORRESPONDENTS

FOR "The Freethinker."—E. Syers, 20s.; E. Swale, 13s.  
N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—In memory of Sarah Corina (deceased),  
5s.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager  
of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4,  
and not to the Editor.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing  
Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One  
year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,  
London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not  
be inserted.

### SUGAR PLUMS

The following portion of a letter received will be of interest to  
our readers:—

"Less than three months ago I had never heard of 'The  
Freethinker,' and I have been a lone hand trying to make  
my friends (and others) to use their reason. With the aid  
of your paper and other publications I have strengthened my  
fighting power, and I realise that a fight is necessary to  
dislodge beliefs so deeply rooted. It is surprising to many  
that my mother and I, who are ex-Catholics, should forsake  
our religion. They condemn us to 'eternal fire' for  
forsaking the Church, but that does not worry us.

We are met by other Catholics with a 'If I thought as  
you do I wouldn't wish to live another day.' They can't  
realise that I am much happier now that my mind is not  
shackled with fears and superstitions. The mind of believers  
in religion are in a static state; set them thinking and  
learning to make inquiries for themselves and religion soon  
fades out. Let them think, and religion cannot stand against  
clear-headed reasoning."

We shall hope to hear from this young lady in the future.

The Bristol and District Branch N.S.S. will hold a meeting  
for members in The Crown and Dove Hotel, Bridewell Street,  
Bristol, on Wednesday, September 19, at 7-30 p.m. Unattached  
Freethinkers interested in the local movement are also invited  
to attend. The Branch Secretary, Mr. P. M. Tovey, 12, Woodfield  
Road, Redland, Bristol 6, will be pleased to hear from any willing  
to help but unable to be at the meeting. Some good work can be  
done in Bristol and the opportunity should not be lost.

The following appeared in the "Church of England News-  
paper" for August 15, 1941. We do not recall having noted it,  
but it is worth reprinting if we did. We can say with confidence  
that the frame of mind indicated has made great advances among  
the Forces since 1911.

"I am an officiating Chaplain to the Church of England  
troops stationed within the bounds of my parish. Towards  
the end of June last year the church was filled with troops  
landed that week at a British seaport after the evacuation of  
Dunkirk. I was bidden to lead their worship in thanking  
God for 'the miracle of Dunkirk.' I had to tell them that  
I could not do this, as I did not feel that God had delivered  
them; that, rather, they were to join their hearts in grati-  
tude, certainly, but that God was not to be credited for their  
escape any more than he was to be blamed for the thirty-  
three thousand whose bodies still lay out there; that God's  
heart rejoiced as much as their earthly fathers' in their rescue,  
and vice versa so far as their gallant comrades were con-  
cerned; that God did not interfere there any more than He  
interfered on Calvary.

"The sermon caused a lot of discussion among both officers  
and men, and the subject still crops up from time to time.

### SPECIAL!

We are still unable to give the exact date on which we  
take possession of our new headquarters. The delay is due  
to difficulties in securing removal and in obtaining various  
permissions. We hope to be able to give a decisive notice in a  
week or two.

After rather more than a year I still feel more or less as I  
did then; but the question which still keeps arising in my  
mind is, Does God interfere in the affairs of men to-day? I  
cannot feel that I can pray for Divine protection from bombs  
either for myself or for my loved ones. I feel, indeed, that  
to pray for safety is as much out of place as to play for  
safety, and that no prayers of mine will deflect either bomb  
or bullet. I am told by my Director that I am most definitely  
wrong in all these ideas."

Some poor miserable well-wisher has been thoughtful enough  
to send us a tract on "How to Find God." We thank him for  
the trouble he has taken, and assure him that we appreciate the  
trouble he has taken. But we can assure him that our concern  
is not to find God, but what use we are to make of him when  
we have found him. We can't get him to send better weather,  
or to cure sickness, or to give fresh knowledge concerning the  
world in which we live. God could not prevent the war, and it  
looks as though he cannot lead us to a favourable peace. To  
trust in ourselves may lead us somewhere of consequence. But  
what real use can we make of Gods in these days?

We have always had a feeling of surprise when we have  
reflected that more people—even Christians—have not put in a  
word of thanks and praise to the Devil. Theologically speaking,  
without him we should never have known Jesus, we should never  
have discovered what and how much we owed to Woman. On the  
authority of the Church, we know that without the devil we never  
should have probed into the "mysteries" of existence. The  
world owes the devil much. The clergy owe him everything.  
Without him they would never have existed. Yet there is not a  
single Church that has had the decency to establish an altar for  
Satan. We praise the Lord for having left us in a state of com-  
plete ignorance, and we round on the devil for having given us  
that inquisitiveness and independence of mind to which we owe so  
much. Now and again the clergy have—perhaps unintentionally  
—paid Satan a compliment when they said that so many of our  
great writers, poets, philosophers and scientists came from Satan.  
Long live Satan!

The B.B.C. Brains Trust is to renew its "labours" on  
September 25, and in the "Star" for September 5 we were  
pleased to note gave a stinging, but well deserved, judgment of its  
utility, to which might have been added its honesty. The "Star"  
writer prophesies that we shall "get a lot of platitudes about  
the number of listeners the show 'attracted.' What an intel-  
lectual inspiration it became to the people of the world. That is  
typical of the Brains Trust." But what is also typical of the  
Brains Trust is the amount of dishonesty and unfree speech.  
First of all the questions are carefully selected so that no  
"dangerous" ones shall be asked of politics or morals, and religion  
is strictly barred, except to receive the stereotyped amount of  
praise. We are not even certain that what is printed is just what  
the members say. The lunch that precedes the sitting was adopted  
—as one official admitted—because the answers could be "cut"  
when necessary. And, of course, only those who—probably  
because of advertisement value—are ready to submit to be partly  
gagged are selected as "talkers." Take away the torrents of  
giggles and the praise of each other, and any haphazard gathering  
of decently educated men and women, with freedom of speech and  
expression of opinion, would knock the present "Brains Trust"  
out of existence.

The "Star" sums up the Brains Trust by saying that most of  
the members "take their job as just entertainment and lively  
talk. Nobody can seriously suggest that snap judgments on  
questions on which members of the Trust are not necessarily  
expert should solemnly be presented to the people as educational."  
We can answer they are not. But the disgrace of men and women  
to allow themselves to be tools of the B.B.C. on account of the  
advertisement that follows leaves us with a feeling of sadness.

## A PLEA FOR INDIVIDUALISM

"We assert the right to think, and tell openly and clearly all we can of what it is we think, and how we think it . . . We here all claim to be Freethinkers, therefore we are no more all of one thought than we are of one stature or of one country."

—CHARLES BRADLAUGH (Address to the International Free-thought Conference, London, September 25, 1881).

FREETHOUGHT and individualism are inseparable. The Freethinker affirms, above all things, the necessity for independent thinking if mankind is really to progress, and he cannot avoid being considerably disturbed by the tendency, in the present age, for the coercive forces of the State to subordinate the individual. Not that the Freethinker disregards the welfare of the community; this is far from the case. He realises that man can only achieve true happiness by co-operation in a communal life, but this is very different from submerging the individual in the mass.

We live, of course, in a world which is more "communised" or more "collectivised" than ever before, due to the influence of machine development. We live, too—let us face it—among human beings who (owing to factors which will be considered later) are incapable of living socially without some organisation to keep "law and order," in other words—a government. The problem is to attain the greatest possible degree of individual liberty—particularly of thought and expression—under a government which must, in some sense, take repressive measures. At this stage in man's evolution there must then, I think, be some form of a compromise between the individual and the State, as there must always be between the individual and the community. Obviously kleptomaniacs and homicides need to be prevented from indulging in their anti-social behaviour, but this is prevention in the sphere of action, where such liberty can only be allowed to the individual as does not interfere with the similar liberty of others. The same does not apply to the world of thought, where original, provocative, progressive ideas are almost invariably disruptive and, in a temporary sense, anti-social, though in the long run beneficial to social life. It is this intellectual domain which concerns us now, in a strong advocacy of individualism whilst recognising, and indeed encouraging, co-operative trends.

These two are not irreconcilable, though to some they may appear so. Rather a voluminous literature has arisen on such matters as "group mind" and "mass instinct," and—as often happens—many unthinking and superficial readers have accepted such ideas without demurring. Nor have aspiring dictators been slow to realise the value of the conception that men in the mass cease to be individuals and become part of the "group mind." Instil this into people for any length of time and they become comparatively docile and pliable. Yet, despite its apparent plausibility, there is no evidence to support the view. In his very fine work on group psychology, Dr. W. A. Brend explains:—

"All effective mass action is the result of training, either deliberately undertaken, or insensibly acquired by social experience, whether the individuals of the mass constitute a congregation in a church, a political meeting, a regiment in the field, a football team, or form a scattered group, as do the members of a religious sect. The individual in an aggregate necessarily behaves differently from the way he does when acting alone because of the difference in the environment which tends to increase his sense of power and diminish his sense of responsibility, but the behaviour of each one is none the less determined by his intelligence, training and emotional make-up. There is no vestige of evidence for a herd instinct which prompts men to combined action, and there is no fundamental difference between the processes of thought of men working in groups and of those working singly."<sup>1</sup>

This is easily illustrated by the actions of different people, even when together, in the face of adversity or danger. Some will remain calm, some will be agitated; some will be brave, others frightened, and so on, depending upon temperament (this being the result of environmental conditions on individual make-up).

Now unquestionably the most influential factor in the shaping of European mental outlook has been the Christian religion. Complete domination of men's minds for over a thousand years, and a varying, but large amount of control for about half that period, cannot fail to produce important consequences. And in the case of Christianity the consequences were disastrous.

Again, however, we have to face, and dispose of a prevalent notion which appears at first glance to be specious. So much so that it is reproduced almost automatically by writers of eminence. This is the oft-repeated statement that Christianity with all its faults, at least has one saving grace: that it has always emphasised the importance of the individual, no matter with what motives. Thus, Professor H. J. Laski, in one of his most recent books, writes:—

"And both the Christian and the non-Christian can at least join hands in supporting what has perhaps been the main contribution of Christianity to social progress, the passionate affirmation of the right of each human being to fulfil his individuality."<sup>2</sup>

With all due deference to Professor Laski, I must state that there is one non-Christian who finds himself unable to join hands on that score. The argument is that Christianity laid stress upon the immortal soul of each individual and the possibility of its salvation. Granted; but this does not mean that the religion encouraged individuality. On the contrary, it emphatically laid down certain rules, certain fixed beliefs, which every person had to unquestioningly accept in order to gain eternal life. And that is only one side, the better side of the picture. The equally important and more effective teaching of Christianity was the surety of eternal damnation if one displayed any individuality whatsoever. The use of such expressions as "the shepherd and his flock" is not accidental. Christians were to behave like sheep or, alternatively, as humble little children, lest "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew xviii. 3). They were expressly told: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16.), and the statement was repeated with slight alteration to eliminate all shadow of doubt on the matter (John iii. 18. 36). Now this hardly seems to me to be a "passionate affirmation of the right of each human being to fulfil his individuality." And the action of the Christian Church towards anybody who showed signs of fulfilling his individuality further supports my view.

Branded as a heretic he would either be forced to recant and do penance for his exhibition of individualism or, if stubborn, he would be removed as a danger—and as a warning—to the rest of the community. And this applied not only to the Roman Catholic Church, but also to Protestant sects wherever they achieved sufficient power as under John Calvin who in fact instituted a totalitarian theocracy at Geneva as bad, on its scale, as modern Nazism, which, of course, is also substantially religious in nature.

Indeed it can truthfully be said that the best part of two thousand years of Christianity in Europe is, in the main, responsible for the recent eclipse of intellectual individualism and the substitution of standardisation and uniformity. To claim that a religion so dogmatically authoritative, so condemnatory and intolerant towards dissenters, has in any way promoted individualism, is simply fantastic. Examples of independent thinkers are to be found, not in the Christian ranks, but in those of the opposition. At first sparse, and never in the majority, but ever at work on the colossal task of liberating the human mind from the thralls of superstition and servitude.

it is they who were the great individualists. And they were individualists even when united, that is the noteworthy point. That is the desirable objective for humanity, and it is the Freethinker who must continue to set the example and urge others to do the same.

For, as Professor John Dewey made clear in his treatment of this subject, the trouble is that men's "conscious ideas and standards are inherited from an age that has passed away; their minds, as far as consciously entertained principles are concerned, are at odds with actual conditions." And he regretted the unwillingness to "re-examine old standards and values."<sup>3</sup> Such a state of affairs is largely the effect of Christianity on human history, and it is as retrogressive as anything with which I am acquainted.

The progressive course, I maintain, can only be pursued with a scientific, freethinking, individualistic attitude of mind. In this way can the individual make his best contribution to the service of the community. Bertrand Russell rightly said during the first war that "a good community does not spring from the glory of the State, but from the unfettered development of individuals,<sup>4</sup> and this needs plenty of reiteration to-day. Add to this the pleasure of independent thought and inquiry for its own sake, and the result is an inimitable combination. The alternative is intolerable.

C. McCALL.

<sup>1</sup> "Foundations of Human Conflicts: A Study in Group Psychology," by William A. Brend, M.A., M.D., B.Sc., M.R.C.P.; Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1944; pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> "Faith, Reason and Civilisation: An Essay in Historical Analysis," by Harold J. Laski; Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1944; p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> "Individualism Old and New," by John Dewey; George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1931; pp. 67 and 149.

<sup>4</sup> "Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism and Syndicalism," by Bertrand Russell; George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1918; p. 145.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### SCIENTIFIC CRUELTY.

Sir,—Dr. Caerfeynon, when treating of giants in his *La Procreation*, says, on the authority of Watkinson, that Bishop Berkeley, thinking the application of "certain hygienic principles" would make a child grow up to be a giant, subjected "a poor orphan named MacGrath" to such treatment. The patient reached seven feet by the age of sixteen years; but he had got only eight inches more when he died in his twenty-first year after having exhibited from childhood "all the infirmities of old age."

The bishop predeceased his victim without revealing the means used in the experiment; but the principal one was believed to have been "a mucilaginous diet."—Yours etc.,

E. CLAYTON DOVE.

### CAUSATION.

Sir,—I can well imagine Mr. Cohen, after reading Mr. Preece's criticism, impishly recalling that remark about proficiency in billiards being "the result of a misspent life." But even supposing him to be, in this respect, the merest novice, this circumstance in no way invalidates his thesis regarding the "central fact of causation"; it can only limit his powers of synthesis and analysis; and quite certainly there is no warrant for deducing from this the conclusion that "he goes too far in asserting that the balls are in causal relation to each other at the moment of impact only. Prior to this they are entirely unrelated."

Greatly daring, however, Mr. Preece goes on to say: "There is a relationship between the two balls even before the cue ball is set in motion." But how, we may ask, is Mr. Preece able to predetermine this when only the vital fact of "impact" can prove it? In the absence of "impact" Mr. Preece is merely indulging in supposition, and confusing a dimensional relation with a causal relation. This is made abundantly clear when he later observes: "How, if the cue ball had not reached the object ball, we still have a change in the relative position of the two

balls . . ." but, we may add, calmly but firmly, certainly no "causal" relation whatsoever.

Clearly, then, Mr. Preece has succeeded only in confusing the issue by substituting for Mr. Cohen's actual link in causation a purely hypothetical supposition.—Yours, etc.,

ROBERT DODD.

WANTED (October 1) Lodgings, Part Board, by University Student. Central London preferred.—Box 72, c/o "The Freethinker, 2/3 Farnival Street, London, E.C.4.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hydo Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m., MESSRS. SAPHIN, HART, WOOD and PAGE.

### LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., S. K. RATCLIFFE: "The Silent English Revolution."

### COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. JOHNSTONE will lecture.

Enfield (Lancs.).—Friday, September 14, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. W. BARKER will lecture.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY will lecture.

### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute), Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. H. L. SEARLE: "Christian Fundamentals."

"MISTAKES OF MOSES." By R. G. INGERSOLL. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

"THE MOTHER OF GOD." By G. W. FOOTE. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

"THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH." By CHAPMAN COHEN. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

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## THE FIGHT TO A FINISH

WE are, it is believed, now about to enter the ring for the final round in the fight for World Supremacy. It will be won only through the sheer exhaustion of one of the contesting parties.

It was thought, and not without cause, that the Axis Powers had overwhelming supremacy in arms, men and equipment. This they certainly had at first and consequently carried all before them until America and Russia were drawn in on the side of the Allies.

The war was obviously being won and was bound to be won, by the side having supremacy in arms. I remember reading an article in which it said: "The Tide would not turn in favour of the Allies until America had reached full production." In spite of the fact that we were continually calling out for God's help, we seemed to place more reliance on America!

If there is a God, his attitude appears to be very clearly as follows: "Now you've started this Bloody War, you can damn well fight it out. I'm not going to have anything to do with it."

At any rate, there never was clearer evidence of non-intervention in spite of weekly Prayers in all the Churches and special Days of Prayer whenever things were looking particularly black. As a matter of fact, the Allies chiefly owe their salvation to Atheist Russia who officially do not recognise the existence of a God at all. They certainly cut Him out from all State Functions and have never sought his aid in this conflict.

The position as I see it could be described in a sketch somewhat as follows:—

A certain family had become antagonistic to one another. They had never lived in harmony together. The father was supposed to have a loving nature, but it was never much in evidence and certainly not among the children. The father drowned the lot once because he was displeased with them, but as more children came along they were just the same, always quarrelling. Two of the boys started a proper "all in" fight on one occasion—Harry and George. They were both athletic, well set-up boys, but Harry was getting the better of it in the early rounds. Poor George's nose was broken, blood was streaming down his face, one eye was completely bunged up. Suddenly Harry slipped up on the floor which was covered with blood and George jumped in to take advantage of the situation. All this time the father was sitting up on a raised platform looking on quite unconcerned. Cries went up from other members of the family who, up to then, had been looking on. Follow up your advantage George. Don't let him get up. Kick him, jump on him; all's fair in love and war. The rest of the family and relations joined in the scrap—some on one side and some on the other. It didn't seem to matter much which. Some started throwing bricks at each other. Some of these unfortunately dropped amongst and injured some of the spectators. Never mind the spectators, went up the cry. Father could have looked after them if he would, but he doesn't seem to be bothering much!

By this time, some were lying about unconscious, limbs had been broken and it looked as though the injuries to some of the weaker and younger members might even be fatal. In due course, through sheer exhaustion, the melee came to an end.

During all this time the father had been looking on watching his children literally tearing one another to bits quite unconcernedly. Some people said that he allowed them to fight it out to a finish just to teach them a lesson in the hopes that they would behave better in future although he had tried this many a time before.

I ask you, however, can you imagine any father watching all this without attempting to stop it. Even a referee in the boxing ring stops a fight when the result is obvious and one of the

party is receiving too much punishment. The very crowd shout out with indignation "Stop the fight referee, he's had enough!"

At the end of the fight, one of the older and wiser of the boys went up to his father and said: "Well father, if you don't mind me saying so, I think it was abominably brutal, if not criminal, of you to look on at all this and do absolutely nothing to stop it. In fact you could have prevented it from starting if you had wished, and yet you look on and see your own children, of whom you have always told us that you think so much, mutilated and maimed for life, one or two even killed under your very nose, without so much as 'turning a hair.' Well, I'm sorry father, but I've lost all the love and respect that I ever had for you."

Now return to the present war. It is known that at this very time the formal "Prayers of Thanksgiving" were already prepared and printed ready for circulation immediately peace was declared whenever it occurred, or even if only one British one German and one Jap soldier were left to tell the story.

C. D. W.

## JESUITS

"What do these worthies

But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter and enslave Peaceful nations?" —MILTON.

THE word Jesuit means craft. The founder of the "Society of Jesus" was the Jesuit called Loyola in the year 1534. He was truly a crafty intriguer, and it is a surprise that he dared to take the name of "Jesus" on his lips. Why Christianity should be mixed up with so many villains it is very difficult to understand. Jesuits have been the curse of the world. They have plotted and planned for the murder of poor human souls. Through their base instrumentality rivers of blood have been shed. This beautiful world has been a huge battlefield. The scenes that have been enacted by Jesuits is sufficient to make the human heart bleed. Many and many a time this fair garden (once called paradise, "and very good," by the maker, God) has been turned into a terrible Inferno where the wildest and most hellish passions have been let loose, and in the name of Christianity and by these unscrupulous villains called Jesuits. How such men can be tolerated in a boasted free and enlightened country and in the present century is beyond all human comprehension, and we have thousands in this country plotting for its downfall, its ruin, its abject intellectual slavery, for greedy, base and unholy selfish ends. From all parts of the world these fiends in human form come. This country is their present happy hunting ground. When other nations refuse to have them, we are foolish enough to have them and find them a home. If the truth ever comes out as to the methods adopted for making converts to the Church of Rome, there will be such a burst-up in this country that Roman Catholicism will become a thing of the past. Jesuits will not always be tolerated. Stealthily and cunningly these men do their work. The end justifies the means. This is the sum total of their philosophy. We know what their means are, we know only too well what they have been. We may summarise them in the following words: Murders, dungeons, chains, spiked jackets, starvation, revolution, and many other revolting and barbarous methods too numerous to mention. They dare not do these things to-day, but they are systematically devising schemes and artfully laying their plans for years to come, when they hope to carry out a complete extermination of their enemies—on a much larger scale than the terrible and horrible massacre of St. Bartholomew.

"EPICLETUS RENKLUAF."